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AUTHOR Blanden, Ernest
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ABSTRACT

The Danville Community Consolidated School District of Danville, Illinois, uses the remediation process to remove unsatisfactory but tenured faculty. The teacher is told what must be remedied and faces several evaluations. The basic obstacles to such a firing process are board policies, negotiated contracts, the employees' defensive actions, and poor supervisory evaluations. One key element in discriminating evaluation systems is the use of job descriptions. Job descriptions should be developed for every personnel classification, possibly by a representative sampling of the personnel acting as a committee. An adequate personnel evaluation system should be described in writing, including a clear statement of the system's purpose, a thorough understanding of who evaluates whom, when, and how, a recommendation for inservice training, information on implementation techniques and timing, and procedures for appeal. In the final analysis, however, the system must be flexible enough for easy use in varying circumstances while maintaining the clarity required for processes that must hold up in court. (Author/PGD)

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DANVILLE COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 118

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING / 516 NORTH JACKSON STREET / DANVILLE, ILLINOIS 61832

TELEPHONE (217) 443-2900

ED173919

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A-5 Ernest Blanden
Director of Personnel

Developing Job Descriptions for Personnel Evaluations

Where WE ARE

The most effective scheme for improving the quality of the instructional program is to improve the quality of personnel performance. It is management's right to evaluate, hire and fire in most states. In Illinois, after a teacher obtains tenure, the board expresses its desire to fire but a third party neutral makes the final decision after a formal hearing.

Million dollar expenditures for materials and equipment alone will not necessarily improve the quality of the instructional program. You must improve the quality of personnel performance. You must develop, maintain, and implement an efficient evaluation system. Evaluation instruments are important, but the effectiveness of personnel evaluations depends upon the extent and effectiveness of the training of personnel who have to make the evaluation system work. No formal evaluation system should be implemented until adequate inservice training has been given.

During this era of declining student enrollment, spiralling inflation and taxpayers' revolts, boards are being forced to make personnel and capital expenditure reductions in all areas. It is now a time of accountability. Unlike industry, boards can not pass the increase in operating cost on to the consumer. Tax referendums are seldom approved by the public. The lack of adequate funds and declining student enrollment has forced boards to analyze most decisions and all facets of the educational process.

Since most expenditures for personnel salaries constitute at least eighty percent of most school budgets, when expenditure reductions are required, we focus our attention on personnel utilization and efficiency.

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When personnel reductions are necessary, most boards desire to utilize that opportunity to rid themselves of the "dead weight" or the least productive personnel not meeting the performance standards. Many of you have fears that you can not remove tenured teachers for unsatisfactory performance. I am here to tell you that it can be done. In our school system, over the last four years, we have removed eleven tenured teachers and many probationary teachers for unsatisfactory performance. Only two cases have been before a hearing officer. Granted, this requires a great deal of time, accurate documentation, legal assistance and "guts." We utilize the remediation process. The principal evaluates the employee and provides recommendations to remedy all performance deficiencies. He or she also directs the employee to contact the Director of Staff Development for any inservice training needed during the remediation period. The Personnel Director evaluates the teacher's performance in writing. The principal and the Personnel Director will re-evaluate the teacher's performance within sixty days. If the deficiencies are not removed in case of a tenured teacher, the formal dismissal procedures will be implemented after consultation with the board's attorney. The board is required by Illinois Statute to deliver by registered mail, in case of remediable deficiencies, a Notice to Remedy ("shape up or ship out"). After a reasonable period of time, a final evaluation report and recommendation is submitted to the board for action.

The basic obstacles are: board policies, negotiated contracts, poor supervisory evaluations, and the employee. You need an effective evaluation system which makes the "good employees" look good; and the "bad ones" look bad.

As you know or will soon witness, personnel reductions are met with resistance from employees' unions and their willingness to take the judical route to retain their jobs. Ten years ago, you had to fight the employee to terminate him or her, today it is the employee, his/her lawyer, and the union.

When personnel decisions are necessary, in the opinion of the board, the board needs an effective discriminating system. This may sound strange coming from a minority, but a board that discriminates, not in terms of race, sex, age or handicap, but with respect to evaluation of personnel performance (good vs. bad), is fulfilling one of its many legal responsibilities.

An important facet of a personnel evaluation system is a job description. They should be developed for every personnel classification. Job descriptions should not be written in stone. Board's needs and the composition of classifications change. The job description should be comprehensive in stating major duties and responsiblities and also how the classification fits into the total district's functions.

There are several ways to approach the task of developing job descriptions for personnel evaluation systems. Listed are some means:

1. The Board can by mandate, direct the Superintendent or Administration to develop a job description and an evaluation system. They will be loved by the unions.

2. The board can hire experts. They will spend thousands of dollars and personnel hours.

3. The board can delegate this responsibility to the total staff. They will tell you that there is no need for an evaluation system.

4. The board can delegate the responsibility to a representative sampling of personnel.

Based upon experience, it is felt that a job description for personnel evaluations, developed by a representative sampling of personnel, is the most viable mean.

The board's major responsibility for developing job descriptions for personnel evaluations should be to provide guidance to the administration and staff. The board should delegate this responsibility to the administration and staff. This delegation of responsibility by the board to the administration and staff would ensure that those who are to be evaluated are a part of the evaluation program development. There will be a greater understanding of the reasons for and details of the plan by members of the staff to be evaluated. Be it understood, the final personnel evaluation system approved will not be acceptable to all individuals or minority groups within the staff and administration. The administration should submit the recommended personnel evaluation system, job descriptions, and instruments to the board's attorney for final analysis to ensure legal soundness prior to the board's final approval or adoption.

The committee appointed to develop job descriptions should be representative of the classification being considered. Since the greatest concern is for teacher evaluations, the recommended committee composition and responsibilities for such classification will be given.

Composition and responsibilities of the committee for developing job descriptions for a teacher evaluation system are:

1. Teachers - six (6) recommended by the union (2 Elementary, 2 Jr. High, 2 Sr. High).

2. Building Principal - three (3) (1 Elementary, 1 Jr. High, 1 Sr. High).

3. Central Administration - one (1) recommended by the Superintendent.

Responsibilities of the committee for developing job descriptions for a teacher evaluation system are:

1. Elect a chairperson.

2. Establish an effective communication system for the committee members and staff. The committee should have the printed minutes distributed to committee members and posted in each school.

3. Analyze the current evaluation practices or the need to develop an evaluation system. If there are no job descriptions, the committee can start researching the current trends in employee evaluation systems in schools, business, and industry.

4. Should report directly to the Superintendent or designee the committee's needs, concerns, and clerical assistance desired.

5. Present their recommended document to all staff for input.

The recommended personnel evaluation system should contain these basic components:

1. Purpose of the evaluation system.

2. The who, what, when and how of personnel performance evaluations.

3. Recommended inservice training for implementation and the date for implementation of the personnel evaluation system.

4. Recommended appeal procedures.

The basic concern from an administrative point of view should be the why and who of an evaluation system. The board should know why personnel should be evaluated, and who will be doing the evaluation.

Why evaluate?

1. To improve instruction and task performance.
2. To inform personnel of what is expected and how he/she is performing in relationship to their potential.
3. To provide information for promotion considerations.
4. To differentiate personnel assignments.
5. To determine merit pay or increments.
6. To grant tenure or deny.
7. To determine inservice training needs for the school district.
8. To provide documentation for termination.

Who should be responsible for evaluations?

The administration should be responsible for personnel evaluations.

The building principal is one vital link in the evaluation system. He/she is responsible for the daily supervision of all personnel. If more than ten percent of the personnel have unsatisfactory performance, you need to evaluate the building principals and the Administration. Supervisory personnel and directors should be available to assist the principal with personnel evaluations.

During your selection process for administrative appointments, administrative applicants should be required to demonstrate their evaluation skills by evaluating a video tape of simulated teaching.

The administration should assist the building principal with implementation of a remediation program if the principal has not been successful in remediating the employee's performance deficiencies.

It is the responsibility of the principal or supervisor to report to the superintendent or designee immediately, personnel in his building who in his/her judgment has been: unduly absent; negligent, insubordinate, incompetent or ineffective in respect to instruction, discipline, or supervisor; guilty of conduct unbecoming a teacher, or guilty of conduct demonstrated not in the best interest of the school order, efficiency or discipline of the school, or whose mental or physical condition is apparently such as to render him unfit for service.

The principal or administrative personnel should be held accountable for personnel performance evaluations. In our district, we have found that the best evaluation instrument is a blank sheet of paper. You state in layman's terms what you observed, provided time parameters and recommendations for remediations. If at all possible, NEVER negotiate evaluation criteria.